

U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION (CODEL) WELDON VISIT TO NORTH
AND SOUTH KOREA -- DEMOCRATIC PEOPLES' REPUBLIC OF KOREA (DPRK)
AND REPUBLIC OF KOREA (ROK)

May 30 – June 2, 2003

A bipartisan congressional delegation comprised of six Members of the House of Representatives traveled to Pyongyang, North Korea (Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea/DPRK) and Seoul, South Korea (Republic of Korea/ROK) May 30 – June 2, 2003:

Curt Weldon (R-PA)
Solomon Ortiz (D-TX)
Silvestre Reyes (D-TX)
Joe Wilson (R-SC)
Jeff Miller (R-FL)
Eliot Engel (D-NY)

OVERVIEW

NORTH KOREA/DPRK

The delegation was the largest congressional delegation to visit the DPRK and the first CODEL to visit the DPRK in five years. The visit occurred during a period of escalating tensions between the DPRK, the United States, and nations of the region resulting from the DPRK October, 2002, admission of its nuclear weapons-related uranium enrichment program. Subsequent DPRK withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT); confirmation of its possession of nuclear weapons; expelling of IAEA inspectors; declared intentions to reprocess its spent fuel; continued sales of missiles and technology to terrorist nations; and allegations of nation-sponsored drug trafficking all served to further raise tensions between the DPRK and the international community.

The delegation visit was the culmination of over a year-long effort by Representative Weldon to gain entry into the DPRK for the purpose of engaging senior DPRK officials in informal discussions, free of the formality of traditional posturing and imposed pressures of negotiation objectives, to share mutual perspectives on the major political, military, and economic issues.

The resulting visit achieved its purpose by providing the Members an opportunity to engage senior DPRK officials (atch 2) in lengthy, candid, unstructured, and often pointed, yet respectful, discussions, in several venues covering the complete range of outstanding issues. While discussions with senior DPRK officials included the predictable hard line rhetoric associated with recent DPRK public statements, balanced discussion took place in the formal as well as more personal informal sessions. The demonstrated goodwill and willingness to go beyond first level posturing gave the delegation reason to believe that there are options that should be considered to avoid

conflict and resolve critical outstanding issues in a way satisfactory to both sides. There is unanimous agreement within the delegation that a way must be found to initiate discussions in an agreed framework at the earliest possible opportunity. Concern exists that failure to address these critical issues in a timely manner could result in the proliferation of nuclear weapons and/or technology to terrorist organizations and States.

Repeated statements were made by the DPRK leadership that their belief is that the Bush Administration seeks regime change in North Korea, “The Bush Administration finds regime change in different nations very attractive...and is trying to have regime change, one by one. This kind of conduct damages the U.S. image in the world and weakens the leadership role of the U.S. This is the heart of the question. If the U.S. would sign a non-aggression pact, we would give up nuclear programs and weapons.” The DPRK seeks normalization of relations and non-interference with its economic relations with South Korea and Japan. Chairman Weldon indicated he did not believe regime change to be the goal of the U.S. -- and stated his position of not advocating regime change. **The issue of regime change is seen as the determining factor in whether a peaceful resolution to the current standoff is possible.**

Chairman Weldon also stated his concern that the establishment of a DPRK nuclear weapons program would lead to similar programs in surrounding nations. He cited Hu-Putin statements calling for a nuclear free Korean Peninsula. The DPRK, Vice Minister Kim, acknowledged this as a valid point, but indicated that the other nations can rely on the U.S. “nuclear umbrella,” while the DPRK has no such option.

A major issue often voiced by DPRK officials remains a requirement on their part to achieve a satisfactory framework for bilateral discussions because of their belief that certain issues “are too serious” to be dealt with in a multilateral framework. The delegation believes flexibility exists within a multilateral framework to satisfy the DPRK officials desires for bilateral discussions.

Requested visits by the delegation to the Pyongyang Information (Computer) Center, a school for gifted students, Kim Il Sung’s birth place, the North Korean movie studio production facilities, and a Christian church as well as casual evening social events permitted the delegation to interact with a wide variety of North Koreans and to travel to several sections of the city.

Prior to departure, Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials extended an open invitation to the delegation for a return visit and further indicated a willingness to consider visits to the Yong Byon nuclear facility.

SEOUL, ROK

In Seoul, the delegation was hosted by President Roh for a breakfast meeting, met with Foreign Minister Yoon, Members of the National Assembly, Ambassador Hubbard, General LaPorte, and other officials to discuss the meetings in the DPRK. The ROK

officials expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the delegation and reinforced the need for dialogue with the North.

OBSERVATIONS

Each of the senior DPRK officials with whom the delegation met cited the importance of the visit, given the current tense relationship between the DPRK and the U.S. They also noted their understanding of the role of Congress and that the delegation was not visiting to negotiate issues for the United States, but to enhance mutual understanding between the two nations.

In each of the meetings, Chairman Weldon cited the past and continued importance of inter-parliamentary exchanges in improving relationships with nations and improving the well-being of the peoples once considered to be enemies of the United States, including the People's Republic of China and the U.S.S.R., and expressed his belief that this could be the case with the DPRK once normalized relations could be established. He also expressed his belief that no one in the Congress wishes ill-will toward the North Korean people and that no one wants another war.

Each of the senior DPRK officials noted the tense international situation and sought to place the blame on the U.S. "because the U.S. seeks to make us give up our military forces which safeguard our political system." Each of the leaders also cited their preference for the "Clinton approach" in the bilateral relationship and took strong exception to President Bush's inclusion of the DPRK as part of the "Axis of Evil." They stated their belief that such a characterization demonstrates that the U.S. is unwilling to "accommodate with our country" and the U.S. seeks regime change. "Further, the U.S. is enlisting other nations to prepare a nuclear first strike – seeking to blackmail and intimidate us... The U.S. does not want to coexist with us... And not only does the Bush Administration not want to coexist, but wishes to get rid of my nation with its nuclear strength... We see the U.S. preparing for a military strike... The U.S. must change its hostile policy." Without necessarily supporting the Bush Administration policies toward the DPRK, all members of the delegation agreed with Representative Engel's point to DPRK officials, that violations of the 1994 Agreed Framework by the DPRK were the reason for the current tensions, not Bush Administration policies.

The DPRK officials stated their belief that the situation can only be resolved by acceptance of the current leadership -- coexistence – and dialogue. And in the meantime it intends to continue to develop its "restraint capability" (nuclear deterrent). "We have tried dialogue and have been patient... Our willingness to meet in Beijing in April shows our flexibility to allow the U.S. to save face, showing our flexibility and sincerity to resolve the issues at any cost... We have not had concrete results. The Bush Administration has not responded to our request for bilateral talks -- they are more focused on our first giving up our nuclear program... This causes us to believe that the Bush Administration has not changed its policy about disarming my nation... We want to conclude a non-aggression treaty between the two countries and avoid a military strike on my country."

DPRK officials explicitly reconfirmed their nation's possession of nuclear weapons and repeated previous public statements regarding the reprocessing of the 8,000 spent fuel rods from the Yong Byon facility. They also indicated they will use the reprocessed materials for making weapons. They further indicated that the only option open to them, given their inclusion in the "Axis of Evil" and U.S. refusal to engage in bilateral discussions, "is to strengthen and possess restraint (deterrent) capability and we are putting that into action...I know some say we possess dirty weapons. We want to deny they are dirty ones...I apologize for being so frank, but I believe you have good intentions and I want to be frank. We are not blackmailing or intimidating the U.S. side. We are not in a position to blackmail the U.S. -- the only super power. Our purpose in having a restraint (deterrent) is related to the war in Iraq. This is also related to statements by the hawks within the U.S. Administration. Our lesson learned is that if we don't have nuclear restraint (deterrent), we cannot defend ourselves."

DPRK officials maintained that their nuclear program is only for deterrence and not being pursued to seek economic aid -- that "we only wish to be left alone. The nuclear issue is directly linked to the security of our nation...We need frank exchange on nuclear policies." DPRK officials indicated that economic sanctions would be viewed as a proclamation of war.

CODEL WELDON

Members of Congress

Curt Weldon (R-PA)
Solomon Ortiz (D-TX)
Silvestre Reyes (D-TX)
Joe Wilson (R-SC)
Jeff Miller (R-FL)
Eliot Engel (D-NY)

Professional Staff

Doug Roach
Bob Lautrup

State Department Interpreter

Tong Kim

Navy Escorts

Commander Lorin Selby
Lt Commander/Dr. Erik Sawyers
Lt Frank Cristinzio
Lt Tamara Mills

DPRK

PAEK, Nam Sun, Foreign Minister

KIM Gye Gwan, Vice Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

CHAI Tae Bok, Chairman, Supreme People's Assembly (SPA)

CHO, Seung Ju, Director General, Bureau of U.S. Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

RHEE Sang No, Director of External Affairs, Presidium of SPA

PAK Myong Guk, Director of U.S. Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

ROK

ROH, Moo-Hyun, President

YOON, Foreign Minister

YOO, Jay-kun, Member, National Assembly

KIM Un-yong, Member, National Assembly

LEE, Jae-joung, Member, National Assembly

SONG, Young-gil, Member, National Assembly

LEE By-yang, Member, National Assembly

PARK, Jin, Member, National Assembly

KIM, Suh-woo, Chief of Staff to the Speaker, National Assembly

SOHN, Jang-nai, former Ambassador to Indonesia

Thomas C. Hubbard, U.S. Ambassador to ROK

General Leon LaPorte, Commander, USFK